

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJECT: THE PEREDA CANDIDACY, AS SEEN BY PEREDA

1. SUMMARY. WITH MANY OF BOLIVIA'S POLITICIANS BUZZING OVER A POSSIBLE FAILURE OF THE PEREDA CANDIDACY, I THOUGHT IT TIME TO GET PEREDA'S OWN PERSPECTIVE. I FOUND HIM QUIETLY CONFIDENT THAT THE ELECTION IS HIS AND WITH NO THOUGHTS OF RETIRING FROM THE RACE. HIS PLANS AND PREOCCUPATIONS ARE DOMINATED BY THE PROBLEMS OF GOVERNING ONCE HE IS ELECTED. HE DOES AGREE WITH HIS OPPONENTS ON ONE MAJOR POINT: THAT HIS BIGGEST PROBLEM MAY BE WINNING BY MEANS OF A PREPONDERANCE OF CAMPESINO VOTES, WITH INADEQUATE SUPPORT AMONG THE GROUPS--URBAN MIDDLE CLASS, LABOR, THE MILITARY, TRADITIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP--WHOSE BACKING IS NEEDED TO GOVERN. END SUMMAARY

2. IN THE COURSE OF A TWO-HOUR LUNCH FEBRUARY 17, GENERAL JUAN PEREDA EXPRESSED COMPLETE CONFIDENCE THAT THE CAMPESINO VOTE WOULD BACK THE BANZER GOVERNMENTS RECORD AND PEREDA PERSONALLY. THEREFORE, HE WOULD WIN THE JULY ELECTIONS. HE WAS AWARE THAT OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WERE EAGERLY AWAITING HIS MISTAKES AND HOPEING HE WOULD FLOUNDER SO THAT EITHER ELECTIONS WOULD BE POSTPONED OR THE OPPORTUNITY CREATED FOR AN OPPOSITION VICTORY. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS CONCENTRATION ON PEREDA WATCHING TO THE OPPOSITION'S FAILURE TO UNITE ON EITHER A PROGRAM OR A
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CANDIDATE. HE SAW INCREASING TENDENCIES TOWARD "ATOMIZATION" AMONG THE OPPOSITION. AT THIS POINT, PEREDA BELIEVES, THERE IS NO PEACEFUL ALTERNATIVE TO ELECTIONS AND A STRONG NATIONALIST CANDIDACY. THERE IS NO TURNING BACK EITHER FOR BOLIVIA OR HIMSELF.

3. ASKED HOW HE EVALUATED THE SOCIALIST FALANGE'S (FSB)

DECISION NOT TO BACK HIM, PEREDA SAID THIS WAS A CLEAR MISTAKE ON THE FSB'S PART, BUT ONE HE COULD MAKE MORE AN OPPORTUNITY THAN A SET BACK. BANZER, PEREDA ADMITTED, WAS VERY UPSET BY THE RUPTURE WITH THE FSB--TO WHICH BANZER WAS PERSONALLY CLOSE--AND HAD AGAIN CALLED PEREDA AFTER MIDNIGHT TO URGE HIM TO RE-OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FSB. BUT PEREDA REFUSED, SAYING THE FSB WAS GREEDY (WANTING THE VICE PRESIDENCY AND A LARGE SHARE OF SLATES ON THE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE LIST) AND PEREDA WAS BETTER OFF WITHOUT SUCH A BIG COMMITMENT TO THE FSB. IN FACT, PEREDA SAID TO ME, HE LIKE THE IDEA OF A MARIO GUTIERREZ CANDIDACY ON THE RIGHT, SILES SUEZO ON THE LEFT, AND PEREDA IN THE MIDDLE. THIS WOULD GIVE HIM MUCH MORE FLEXIBILITY TO DEVELOP A MORE PROGRESSIVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PLATFORM AND TO PREEMPT NOTIONS OF A "CENTRIST" COALITION SPONSORED BY THE TOPATER GROUP OR DISSIDENT MIDDLE GRADE MILITARY OFFICERS. FURTHERMORE, WHILE THERE WERE SOME GOOD PEOPLE IN THE FSB (HE CITED GASTON MOREIRA AND MARIO SERRATE) THERE WERE ALSO SOME TOUGH REACTIONARIES WITH WHOM NEITHER PEREDA NOR HIS CAMPESINO SUPPORTERS COULD BE COMFORTABLE. MAYBE, IF A HUMBLER FSB SHOULD COME TO PEREDA LATER OFFERING SUPPORT ON DIFFERENT TERMS, IT COULD BE ACCOMMODATED IN PEREDA'S COALITION, BUT HE COULD LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE.

4. I ASKED WHETHER PEREDA WAS NOW GOING TO JOIN THE LINE AND SEND AN EMISSARY TO NEGOTIATE WITH VICTOR PAZ. PEREDA RESPONDED THAT HIS MAIN PROBLEM WAS TO FORGE A COALITION THAT WOULD STAY CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH HIM THROUGH FOUR OR FIVE YEARS IN THE PARLIAMENT. HE DID NOT NEED BROADER ALLIANCES OF ELECTORAL CONVENIENCE, IF THIS INCLUDED ELEMENTS WHICH WOULD WIN PARLIAMENTARY SEATS ON HIS TICKET AND THEN GO THEIR OWN WAY IN THE PARLIAMENT. THE PAZ FACTION OF THE MNR, PEREDA SAID, WAS THE ONLY UNKNOWN IN THE EVOLVING ARRAY OF FORCES. THE MNR AND MIR ON THE LEFT WOULD GO WITH SILES SUAZO. PEREDA'S COALITION WOULD EMCOMPASS THE PDC, THE PIR, PSC, PRS, CUN, CEN AND THE PRO-BANZER ELEMENT OF THE MNR. THE FSB WOULD PUT UP MARIO GUTIERREZ. PEREDA CONSIDERED THE PAZ FACTION OF THE MNR IMPORTANT, BUT HE SUSPECTED THAT PAZ WOULD IN THE END SUPPORT A WINNER OR REMAIN UNCOMMITTED. NOW, WHEN THE OPPOSITION WAS TRYING TO CREATE THE IMAGE OF A FAILING PEREDA CANDIDACY, WAS NOT THE RIGHT MOMENT FOR PEREDA TO APPROACH PAZ. PAZ WOULD PRESENT EXCESSIVE DEMANDS FOR HIS SUPPORT WHICH WOULD HURT PEREDA IN THE LONG RUN. PAZ WOULD WAIT TO SEE HOW THE PEREDA CAMPAIGN FARED. WHEN THE CAMPAIGN PICKED UP MORE MOMENTUM, PEREDA COULD APPROACH PAZ FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH.

5. PEREDA SAID HIS STRONGEST ADVANTAGE WAS THE COUNTRY'S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE POLITICIANS OF THE PREVIOUS GENERATION. HE, THEREFORE, HAD TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO SELL OUT TO THEM. HIS PROBLEM

WAS TO PROVE THAT HE WAS HIS OWN MAN AND WOULD EXERCISE STRONG LEADERSHIP. THEREFORE, HE WOULD CHOOSE HIS WON MAN FOR VICE PRESIDENT

IN DUE TIME; THE POSITION WAS NOT FOR SALE. (HE LATER QUALIFIED THIS BY SAYING IF THE MNR HAD A GOOD MAN, HE WOULD CONSIDER THIS)

6. REGARDING HIS CAMPAIGN PLANS, PEREDA SAID HIS NEXT MOVE WOULD BE TO ANNOUNCE HIS COALITION, WITHOUT THE IMPRESSION THAT FURTHER ADDITIONS WERE EXCLUDED. HE WOULD ALSO GET BACK ON THE TRAIL, SPENDING

A LOT OF TIME IN THE ALTIPLANO TOWNS AND VILLAGES, THEN THE COCHABAMA VALLEY, AND THE MINING AREAS, PARTICULARLY POTOSI AND ORURO.
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7. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM PEREDA'S DETERMINATION TO PRESS HIS CAMPAIGN AND FROM HIS CONFIDENCE, THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL HAVE TO SWITCH THEIR EFFORTS TO BEATING PEREDA, RATHER THAN WAITING FOR HIM TO STUMBLE OR FOR BANZER TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS. (PEREDA IS ACCURATE IN SO CHARACTERIZING THE OPPOSITIONS STANCE TO DATE). MOST INTERESTING TO ME WERE 1) PEREDA'S INDICATION THAT HE HAD REJECTED BANZER'S ADVICE ON A KEY POINT OF ELECTION STRATEGY AND 2) APART FROM THIS INCIDENT, HE DID NOT MENTION IN THE COURSE OF TWO HOURS BANZER OR EDWIN TAPIA AND JAVIER ARCE, TWO KEY BANZER MEN WHO HAVE JOINED THE PEREDA CAMPAIGN.
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